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JOURNAL

JANUARY 2011



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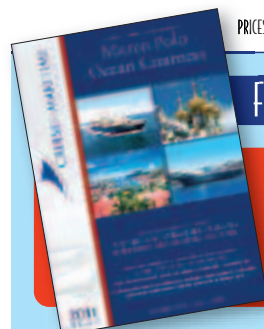
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An inefficient railway pays dividends

TRANSPORT minister Philip Hammond says the coalition government has showed some commitment to rail transport. So far, it has. I even have some sympathy for his desire for 'a relentless drive for efficiency on the part of the industry', although personally I'd skip the 'relentless'.

ASLEF isn't opposed to efficiency. But I'm concerned that the minister and our union have different ideas about what 'efficiency' means.

For us, an efficient railway is one that offers reliable and safe travel to all parts of the country at a reasonable cost. I have the sneaking suspicion, however, that the government's ideal is a railway run on a shoe-string and a prayer, but which makes large profits for private shareholders.

The interim report of the 'value for money' rail review that Sir Roy McNulty is carrying out for the government did little to allay my suspicions. The truth is, the government doesn't know how to run a railway. We would all be better served if it simply employed people who do.

The first point in Sir Roy's report that the minister highlighted was something of a waste of ink in these recycling times. It says 'the railway is costing more than it used to and more than it ought to. Greater efficiency would realise savings of £600 million to £1,000 million per annum by 2018-19 without cutting services or lowering quality'.

I see something of a contradiction here. You don't need to be an Old Etonian to understand that if you spend less, you get less. How can the railway not be adversely affected if a billion pounds a year is lifted from the till?

And there is the point that the railway costs more every year. Well, yes, that's true. But the major reason is that, post privatisation, millions of pounds are now being taken out of the industry each year to pay dividends to private shareholders.

Surely it's inefficient to pay out railway funds to people who do nothing to earn it?

Keith Norman
General Secretary



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**More than
just a union**



Government pledge: 'We will do nothing that reduces the amount of freight carried by rail'

SPEAKING in a House of Lords debate last month about heavier and longer lorries (LHVs), government transport spokesman Earl Attlee told the House of Lords, 'We will do nothing that reduces the amount of freight carried by rail.' And he categorically ruled out permitting any trials of goods vehicles longer than 18.75 metres or heavier than 44 tonnes.

However he added that the government were awaiting the conclusions of research into 'a small increment in the length of articulated lorries. He also conceded that Lord Snape, the former Labour MP for West Bromwich East, was 'mostly right' when he said

- the heaviest goods vehicles directly abstract traffic from rail freight
- the road haulage industry has for years been claiming - spuriously - that heavier and longer goods vehicles would mean fewer of them
- the heaviest goods vehicles have, for over 30 years, failed to pay their true track costs; and that accepting longer and heavier vehicles will cause even more damage to Britain's roads, which will be paid for by other

taxpayers

The Earl went on to add that the government has 'absolutely no intention of increasing the gross weight of a goods vehicle or altering the permitted axle weights for precisely these reasons'.

Lord Davies of Oldham, who as Bryan Davies was Labour MP for Enfield North and later for Oldham Central and Royton, wanted to know the reasons for a delay in introducing charging for heavy goods vehicles, especially 'as he is aware of the unfairness of foreign lorries coming into this country and using our roads without cost' and was told the government were 'working on it'.

The Earl also confirmed that it is the policy of this government to carry as many goods by rail as possible and to transfer goods from road to rail wherever possible.

ASLEF's general secretary Keith Norman welcomed the statements. 'This is very heartening for all of us who have campaigned against longer and heavier vehicles (LHVs),' he said. 'We will now seek to convince the government to extend their policy from 'not doing anything to reduce rail freight' to one of actively supporting its extension.'

Newsinbrief

● MARCH TO THE PLYMOUTH WEEKEND FORUM!

Districts 6 and 7 are organising a joint weekend forum in Plymouth over the weekend of 25 - 27 March.

The subsidised cost at the New Continental Hotel in Milbay Road will be £110. 'We're expecting a high demand so I'd encourage people to book early,' says District 6 organiser Mick Whelan.

If you are interested, please contact either Mick (mwhelan@aslef.org.uk) or District 7 organiser Stan Moran (smoran@aslef.org.uk)

● RETIRED MEMBERS RAFFLE

The result of the union's Retired Members' Section (RMS) 2010 raffle draw was

- 1st Prize Ticket number 33539 L Boxhall
- 2nd Prize Ticket number 08587 R Jackson
- 3rd Prize Ticket number 00075 A Broome
- 4th Prize Ticket number 76680 Mrs M Tyson

'The RMS Committee wishes to thank all those who took part in the draw for their support,' says RMS Treasurer Alan Taylor.

● KEY RAIL FREIGHT LINK WELCOMED

Network Rail last month announced the go-ahead of the Felixstowe to Nuneaton rail freight upgrade.

Freight on Rail welcomed the move with its manager, Philippa Edmunds, saying, 'Rail already has a quarter of the business out of Felixstowe, Britain's largest container port - and this traffic can expand once these infrastructure limitations, which have impeded rail growth along the A14 corridor, start to be lifted.'

She added that the combination of gauge and capacity schemes will allow some rail freight services to go directly to the Midlands and the North, avoiding London.

LINES FROM THE TRACKS

A freight driver who doesn't want to be named sent these touching, nostalgic and talented lines that really hit a chord at this season. He calls it 'Don't waste your life sitting staring at the fire ...'

*In a warm and cosy chair by a fire bright and burning.
Half remembered thoughts of distant things.
Of times gone by, and days of simpler meaning.*

*To the mess at Barnsley station, fire blazing bright and hot in darkness.
And a clock whose hands move slothly.
With a measured beat.
To half closed eyes and drooping heads.
Each in their own world, womb like, none demanding.*

*A subtle smell of iron and wood, a shaded light, a comfy seat.
A teapot lukewarm, still inviting, quiet talk of matters unimportant.
The sudden ring of bells to left and right, the clank and thump of levers pulled,
And pointers swinging.*

*Endlessly marching one by one, a queen of hearts, a jack, a king.
Fall like soldiers on the field of Ypres.
Time needs be spent in purposeful pursuits, while men wait for the call to action.
Whose memory, must like a god be sure
When every card that comes is known before.*

Rail fare increases are 'madness' says GS

KEITH NORMAN, general secretary of train drivers' union ASLEF, has condemned fare increases of 6.2% from next January as 'bordering on madness'. Some fares could rise by as much as 10.8%.

'There is no rationale in the government one day saying it intends to encourage and promote rail and then allowing fares to rise by exorbitant amounts,' he said. 'The policy is

supposed to entice more people to use rail. Fare increases like this drives them away. There is no logic.'

The Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) has admitted that the median price increase will be five times greater than the 2010 increase of 1.1%. Increases in season tickets and off-peak long-distance journeys – about half of all fares – are pegged at the inflation figure for

the previous July, which was 4.8%, plus one percentage point.

A spokesman for ATOC put the blame entirely on the government policy of 'reducing the amount that taxpayers contribute and requiring passengers to pay more'.

'The government says that it sees a social role for rail, especially in terms of meeting targets to reduce global warming,' Keith says. 'It can't simply announce the policy and then wash its hands of

all responsibility. It must step in to keep prices down.'

Keith also warns that worse is to come because of announced cuts of £5bn to annual rail subsidies in future years.

'This is bad news for passengers, commuters, the industry and all who work in it,' Keith says. 'What kind of economic genius thinks you can stimulate and grow an industry by pricing customers away?'

Mixture of ill-fortune and good luck at Oxshott



It was a miracle that no one was seriously hurt in the incident



The off-side of the carriage where the cement mixer landed

Last month added to the risks undertaken by our members – the possibility of having a cement mixer land on top of the train!

It was only good luck that prevented more than five people being injured in the accident just after three

in the afternoon near Oxshott station in Surrey.

The lorry was travelling from the A3 towards Leatherhead when it careered through the wall of the road bridge and hit the roof of the passing

passenger train, before bouncing off and landing on the embankment. The driver was unharmed.

Surrey Police are appealing to anyone who witnessed the incident to call them on 01483 639922.



NO EUROSTAR TRAVEL FACILITIES

District Organiser Graham Morris says there is good news and bad news from Eurostar on travel facilities. 'They say they would like to offer the same travel facilities to their non-protected staff – but that they are not in a position to do so as a result of their relationship with ATOC. Eurostar is not considered to be a TOC and so in effect is not recognised by ATOC.'

UNION REPS PROFIT FIRMS

Government research in 2007 shows that the UK's 200,000 trade union workplace reps play a major role in improving the workplace for their colleagues, while increasing productivity.

The research found that union reps in the public sector save the tax payer between £167 million and £397m every year by helping to resolve disputes, increasing the take up of training and reducing staff turnover. Union learning reps are worth between £94m and £156m in the public and private sector in terms of increasing productivity.

WALES ACTION SUSPENDED

Proposed industrial action last month, after pay talks broke down with Arriva Trains Wales, was suspended after last-ditch talks between ASLEF and the company.

A series of intense negotiations between negotiators led to an improved offer being made which the union's executive committee agreed to put to the members in a formal ballot of the union's 478 train driver members in the company.

The ballot result is due shortly after this edition of the Journal goes to press.



PASSENGERS SLEEP ON TRAINS – ALL NIGHT!

The icy conditions at the start of December meant that passengers in Kent were forced to spend the night sleeping on the train.

Trains became stuck near and between Orpington and Sevenoaks and passengers set up makeshift camps in the carriages. They remained there until coaches arrived to take them to their destinations at around half past five.

In West Sussex more than 300 commuter passengers were left stranded overnight on a train stuck at Three Bridges station after a series of line failures. There were major delays and cancellations on most lines including Eurostar, Southeastern, First Hull, ScotRail, CrossCountry, NXEA and East Midlands.

Out of control Tube runs four miles down London track

LONDON Underground has blamed 'human errors and faulty equipment' for a 90-ton tube running out of control on London's busy Northern line for four miles last August. But as safety chiefs presented a report on the incident to the board of Transport for London last month, Steve Grant, ASLEF's officer in the capital, accused management of a 'whitewash'.

'We don't believe this is the true story about everything that happened,' said Steve. 'It seems suspicious to me that this is the first time London Underground has refused to involve ASLEF in investigating an incident of

this sort.

'We put forward 110 questions - and we've had responses to a handful.'

The century of questions included why union reps were not advised until hours after the incident; why pegging was stopped; why was there no attempt to 'wrong road' a train behind the defective one to push it uphill to East Finchley before the start of the morning peak and whether the coupling bar had been deployed in the optimum position.

The engineering train, which had broken down at Kentish Town, rolled downhill at the peak of the rush hour. It was being towed out

of the way by an out-of-service passenger train when a coupling device broke.

It finally came to a stop at Warren Street, where the track goes uphill, as signal controllers redirected trains to the alternative City branch. The LUL report said among other things that the train's brakes had been disconnected for towing - but there was no emergency brake; and that the coupling device was flawed.

'If management are serious about preventing incidents of this kind, they should consult experts,' Steve Grant added. 'They have ASLEF's number.'

German Arriva goes Italian

THE railways used to be so easy. Every country ran its own service. Not any more. In the latest pointless and pricey manoeuvre, Deutsche Bahn is selling its Arriva German activities to the Italian state railway Ferrovie dello Stato. This is because the European Commission insisted it sold them as a condition of its approval of DB's acquisition of the UK-based Arriva Group. Anyone looking for sense in all this should give up now.



Maintenance men, as these pictures show, are like London buses you wait for one for ages, and then a few come along! One of these photos is from China and the other from South Norwood last month ...



DE-ICERS 'BEING SERVICED' IN WINTER

SOUTHEASTERN and Network Rail have been subjected to icy blasts of bad publicity after the travel chaos of early December. It seems that two vital de-icing trains were away for servicing at the height of the big freeze.

'It is farcical that de-icing trains should go in for maintenance in the winter, when they are needed, rather than during the summer, when they are not,' said canny Tory MP Greg Clark. He was genuinely 'Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells' as he made the point that the number of de-icing trains had in any case been whittled down from eight to just two over the last 20 years.

Bristol defiant on cuts!

Defying the government, defying the weather - nothing stops the Bristol branch!

Bernard Kennedy, Andy Hudd and the ASLEF Bristol Branch Banner joined over 1,000 other demonstrators at Bristol's recent anti-cuts demonstration.



WE'VE had a letter from Anne R. Laker in Australia asking if anyone knows which years her grandfather might have driven the Flying Scotsman. She's enclosed this photo and knows the people in it are Drivers J. Roper of Edinburgh and F. Perry of London (her grandfather) and Firemen C. Mabson of London and A. Faingrieve of Edinburgh. She thinks the train number was 2564 and that the photo was taken in September 1929.

'My grandfather's



name was Frederick William Perry and he was born about 1890, and died about age 70. He lived in Alverstone Avenue in East Barnet,' she says. 'My two sons and their two sons want

to know if he was the driver who broke the speed record!'

If you have any information, let us know and we'll pass it on to Anne. (And we won't mention the Ashes - much!)

TRAVEL FACILITIES IN THE HOUSE Over 50 MPs have signed a House of Commons Early Day Motion (number 500) drawn up by ASLEF Group convener Kelvin Hopkins, which calls on the government to urge ATOC 'to ensure a more equal and improved system of travel facilities provision is introduced forthwith'. Ask your MP if they have signed this initiative to end the two-tier system.

Retired members bid fond farewell to Arkwright Road

ASLEF's Retired Members Section – now over 2,000 strong - held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) at the union's head office at 9 Arkwright Road in November. Bill Dale, a member of the Section from the unions' Chingford Branch, has provided this account of what was a rather special, and somewhat nostalgic, meeting ...

THE 2010 AGM was tinged with sadness and nostalgia - because it marked the last time that we would be in the building that has been ASLEF's head office since 1921. Many of those present had memories of coming here in times of dispute, particularly the dramatic stoppage of 1982 - but of course we also visited at less pressing moments. Arkwright Road has been the work-place of many of the union's officers and staff and I'm sure if the walls could speak they would have a few tales to tell.

All the members at the meeting were given a certificate commemorating this final AGM to be held at Arkwright Road. We all look forward to hearing where our new HO will be; and in the meantime, on behalf of the RMS, we wish all officers and staff well in the new premises.

EC President Alan Donnelly welcomed us as the General Secretary was out at an important meeting with MPs. Alan spoke about the current union struggles of our freight drivers and their conditions of service and updated us on the healthy state of the Society's finances. He was confident that a positive decision would soon be made on a new headquarters building.

POLITICS, PENSIONERS AND PENSION SCHEMES

This year's AGM was addressed by three speakers. Ken Livingstone, Labour's candidate for London Mayor, recognised the need to encourage people to use public transport and the necessity to look at lower fares, to combat pollution and to be aware of environmental problems. He insisted that we need less air



traffic, the biggest polluter, and more rail infrastructure. He also argued that council house building must be a priority.

Dot Gibson, General Secretary National Pensioners Convention, also talked about the housing shortage and about possible changes to the NHS. She expressed the NPC's support for unions ('the backbone of the NPC') fighting to defend jobs and services. She insisted that the NPC needs policies reflecting what pensioners want from the next government if they are to secure our votes. She was scathing about Tories who talk of the 'big society' yet plan to cut out experts in social care and replace them with volunteers. 'Pensioners will be hit the hardest by government cuts and could be £710 worse off a year,' she said.

Dave Tyson, the Employee Trustee of Railway Pensions Scheme, explained how valuations-assets-liabilities are arrived at. He said the actuaries,



who look at the overall picture of pension funds' income and expenditure, seem to think that one of the problems affecting the finances is that pensioners are living too long! (Good for us! Let's keep going to annoy them more!). He covered a lot of ground including the Pension Act and the pension protection scheme and we're lucky to have such a knowledgeable advocate as Dave.

RAFFLES, RESOLUTIONS AND RECOGNITION

The take-up of RMS prize draw tickets was disappointing, but we still managed to provide decent prizes – one of which was won by our chairman, Ray Jackson. (No comment!). We then discussed motions to go to the union's annual conference (AAD) before re-electing, with thanks, all our existing RMS officers.

An auction for a Southern Region 1982 strike plate was won by Bob Thatcher (No relation!) and executive committee member



Nigel Gibson presented an ASLEF 50 year membership golden medallion to Brother Peter Manley.

Shortly before closing the General Secretary arrived and gave us an update on the discussions about freight and other matters which he had been holding during the morning with MPs. Keith said he looked forward to welcoming us next year at a new head office.

Members had travelled from all over the country to attend the AGM and I'm sure we all enjoyed a good day. Personally, I found it very useful, very informative and at times entertaining. It was rewarding to be amongst such a fraternity that could only be found in a union like ours.

On that note I would like to urge members currently retired to join us if they are not already a member – and I'd urge members approaching retirement to consider membership. Whatever you do in retirement - keep active!

DB Schenker pay deal is no 'race to the bottom'



**says EC
President
Alan Donnelly**

I BELIEVE it is timely for ASLEF's executive committee to assure our members that we recognise the problems that the recent recession have brought to the freight side of the railway - and the effects they could have on train drivers. However, we will not accept this is an opportunity or excuse for management to eradicate our terms and conditions.

Over the last two years ASLEF's officers, company councils and the former EWS/DBS company council have all worked tremendously hard to ensure that our drivers are not forced out of the industry through compulsory redundancies. Their success must be recognised - but the problems still continue.

We have gone through a

period where we have had to accept temporary alterations to our terms and conditions. We have endured reduced hours contracts and voluntary redundancies. But I can assure you that not one of these decisions was made without the interests of our members being put first.

The Company Council has had to deal with challenges not seen since the 1960s. While we may not be in the situation we would like, it is equally clear that if not for the work and commitment of our representatives, ASLEF members would be in a much worse position.

The problems facing the freight industry are real and we must face up to them, addressing the issues as they arrive, no matter how difficult they seem. But we will always put ASLEF members first. Dealing with temporary alterations to our T/Cs during a down-turn in the economy or recession is one thing - but exploiting and cynically



using this position to make an attack on long fought for terms and conditions is something very different. We will firmly resist this.

If the problems we face are to be addressed correctly, it requires goodwill from both sides. Sadly this has been lacking. We believe the recession has been used to disguise poor resourcing and other managerial issues that have caused the company's problems for many years. We are prepared to work with our employers to see the freight industry grow because it is in everybody's interests.

We have set up Freight Forums to identify the issues in freight and discuss how to deal with the effects of a down turn in the economy and we have developed a better long-term strategy which offers the freight sector security and stability.

Adopting a short-term quick-fix policy can lead to greater problems in the long term for our members. The DBS 2010 pay deal smelt of a 'race to the bottom' on our terms and conditions. Let me assure you that this is not the way forward for ASLEF.

ASLEF gave a warm reception to Black History Month

**reports Floyd Doyle, the
Chair of ASLEF's Black and
Ethnic Minorities
Representative Committee
(BEMRC)**



LAST October was the first time the union organised an event around Black History month, and the reception we held at Head Office combined a social occasion with invited guests giving some background to the campaign and other relevant issues.

Atta Yaqub explained how 'Show Racism the Red Card' had started and he had plenty of interesting stories. One was about the then Newcastle goalkeeper Shaka Hislop being racially abused at a petrol station by his own Magpies fans. They then realised who he was - and wanted his autograph!

Professor Reg Davies, talking about the

history of ethnic minorities on the footplate, explained that many ethnic minorities came here in the 50's to help the 'mother country' with its labour shortage. As part of the Commonwealth they regarded themselves as 'British' and many were disappointed not to find themselves welcomed as they expected they would be.

Both speakers gave us a lot of interesting facts - as well as a few horror stories on the racism that black and ethnic minorities encountered whilst just trying to do their jobs and feed their families like any other worker.

One of our committee members, Aaron Clapp, has been working hard to compile what he calls 'a living history' of retired black and ethnic drivers by filming interviews either at their homes or at ASLEF reunions. He's also interviewed white drivers to get their perspective on attitudes to working with black and ethnic drivers during the early years, and to explore how things have changed. This is an ongoing project and Aaron is still accumulating information. It was very interesting to see the different perspectives of how black and white drivers viewed their treatment, and how attitudes have changed



**We took the
opportunity to
present our stalwart
Surjeet with his
long-service medal**



**Aaron Clapp explains
his 'living history'
project. Photos by
Pat Blake**

over time.

The General Secretary opened the meeting and there was a good turn-out from lay members, the Executive Committee and ASLEF's Women's Committee. We're all grateful to the union's Equal Opportunities Administrator Lee James for organising food and refreshments.

It was a successful event and we're eager to put on another next year. Hopefully we'll see you all there!

The law and equal rights ...

LAST month the union organised a seminar of activists from all over the country at head office to discuss the implications of the Equality Act 2010, which became law on 1 October. 'The Act simplifies the current laws and strengthens them in some areas,' says National Organiser Simon Weller. 'It is important to understand the rights we have – even as we constantly seek to improve and expand upon them.'

Here, with thanks to Thompsons solicitors, we offer a question and answer summary of some of the new rights. For full details of the Equality Act 2010 visit www.equalities.gov.uk/equality_act_2010.aspx

WHAT DOES THE NEW ACT OF PARLIAMENT DO?

It provides protection for those who are discriminated against because of their association with someone who has a 'protected characteristic' – which is to say

- age
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- marriage and civil partnership;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation.

For example, if a man is refused flexible working to look after an elderly parent when other workers who do not have to care for an elderly parent have been allowed to work flexibly, then he may be able to argue that he has been discriminated against because of the protected characteristic of age arising from his association with his elderly parents.

ARE EMPLOYERS LIABLE IF WORKERS ARE HARASSED AT WORK?

Yes, employers are liable for harassment of their employees by third parties such as customers or suppliers if

- the employee is harassed more than once (not necessarily by the same person)
- the employer knows of at least two previous incidents of harassment; and
- the employer fails to take reasonable steps to prevent it happening to that person again.

Employers are already liable for this form of harassment when it takes place because of someone's sex, but it now extends to the other 'protected characteristics'



Senior TUC Equality Officer Sally Brett told the Arkwright Road meeting that this was 'a landmark piece of legislation'

CAN A MALE MEMBER BRING A CLAIM OF HARASSMENT IF HE SEES A FEMALE COLLEAGUE BEING SUBJECTED TO SEXIST COMMENTS?

Yes. Now witnesses to harassment can also bring a claim of harassment provided that they can show that the conduct was related to a protected characteristic, such as sexual harassment, and that the conduct had the purpose or effect of violating his dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for him.

WHAT OBLIGATIONS DOES AN EMPLOYER HAVE TO HELP A DISABLED PERSON TO DO THEIR JOB?

Employers need to make a 'reasonable adjustment' where a person is disabled – that is, they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

Provided a person can show that they have a disability as defined, then where there is a provision, criterion or practice which puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to people who are not disabled, the employer is under a duty to take reasonable steps so that the disabled person is not put at a disadvantage.

DOES THE NEW LAW SAY ANYTHING ABOUT INCREASING ETHNIC MINORITY REPRESENTATION IN POLITICS?

Yes, the new law includes positive measures specific to the work of political parties and other elected offices. These measures will allow political parties to address under-representation of people with a particular

protected characteristics, including those from ethnic minority communities. For example, they allow the:

- creation of dedicated committees and groups exclusively for those with a specific protected characteristic, which will enable them to discuss matters of specific relevance to them;
- adoption of broad shadowing, internship and mentoring opportunities; and
- reservation of seats on committees

HAVE THE TIME LIMITS FOR BRINGING AN EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNAL CLAIM UNDER THE DISCRIMINATION LEGISLATION CHANGED?

No, the time limit for bringing a claim for discrimination on one of the protected characteristics is three months less one day from the act of discrimination, or, where the act is continuing, from the last act.

Where there is a breach of a sex equality clause (equal pay) the time limit for bringing a claim is 6 months from the end of the contract.

ARE THERE ANY CHANGES TO THE POWERS OF EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNALS?

Employment tribunals can suggest how an employer can put things right for a worker if they were treated unfairly. But most of the time this does not help the employer's other workers, because most people who complain to employment tribunals have stopped working for the employer.

The Equality Act now allows the employment tribunal to tell the employer their advice should apply to all their workers, even if/when the one who complained doesn't work there any more.

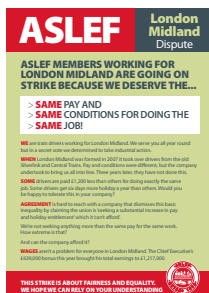
No harmony at London Midland

ASLEF's 600-plus members working on London Midland Trains have voted to take industrial action on 23 December as part of a dispute over equal pay and conditions for drivers working for the company.

'London Midland is made up of two previous franchises, Silverlink and Central Trains,' explains ASLEF officer Mick Whelan. 'We have been negotiating for three

years to harmonise the conditions of drivers from the two companies but our efforts have been resisted by management all the way.

'Some drivers are being paid £1,200 less than other drivers for doing exactly the same job. It is a ludicrous situation and we will be taking strike action to demonstrate the strength of feeling of



Members will distribute leaflets explaining the union's case to the public

our membership at London Midland.'

The company has been informed of the membership vote and the union's decision.



Tosh McDonald makes a point at the Donny meeting

Union workshop on political organising

A WELL attended ASLEF political organising workshop took place in Doncaster at the end of last year which heard an exchange of views on how the union could build its influence in the sphere of local politics - particularly in local authorities and local Labour parties

The morning session heard Executive Committee Member for District 4 Tosh McDonald highlight the need for members to engage in local politics to stand against the cuts to council budgets. Mick Lyons, a retired ASLEF member who is a Labour councillor for Halton Moor ward on Leeds City

Council, called on union branches to support activists in pursuing public service. Dave Watson, one of several ASLEF members holding office on Immingham town council, gave an outline of his role and responsibilities.

Yorkshire and Humber Labour party communications chief Kieran Waters underlined the importance of union branches affiliating to local Labour parties to maximise influence, while the Labour Group leader on Doncaster City Council, Sandra Holland, discussed the challenges of engaging members in local politics.

BRITISH RAIL TOP FOR WIFI

RAIL travellers in Britain have better onboard wi-fi than those in mainland Europe, with only a limited number of major routes and train types covered in countries like Germany and France.

The latest to join is National Express East Anglia, which will offer (for a fee of £2.95) wi-fi on the London-Norwich route from January and on the Stansted Express from May.

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I helped plant the seeds of ASLEF's Union Education

- says **Geoff Stuttard**, now 90 years old, a former Senior Tutor in Industrial Relations at the University of London ...

ONE DAY in 1968 when I was working in the university's Extra-Mural Department I received a call from Don Pullen who was then the ASLEF official responsible for the Southern Region. Don asked me if I would talk at an ASLEF weekend conference in Folkestone about the then highly-controversial 'Prices and Incomes Policy'. Naturally I said I would, with pleasure.

A few weeks later I was beside the sea-side with a group of ASLEF members enjoying hours of lively discussion and probing questions. At the conclusion I told them they were very intelligent and knowledgeable about their industry – but knew very little about industrial relations. I hardly need to say that this led to some considerable argument! It concluded, however, on a positive note.

A FRUITFUL INVITATION

I suggested that some of the group might like to look in on an Industrial Relations course I was running for trade unionists in Central London on a shift basis, with one meeting at 1000 and one at 1930. Four of them took me up on the offer and after a couple of meetings they told me I should speak to their General Secretary about education. That is how I came to meet Ray Buckton.

Ray was a fellow Yorkshireman and we got on well. He told me he had always wanted to expand ASLEF's educational provision and asked if I had any ideas how this could be achieved.

'The University has recently bargained with employers and arranged paid day-release courses for many union groups in the London area,' I told him. 'Why don't we try to do something similar with British Rail?'

Ray sold me the key person to see about this would be the Industrial Relations Manager at BR, a man called Len Neal. It happened that I'd known Len very well in the past, but I'd lost touch with him. In fact, we'd met when Len was a 'bummarree', a meat porter at Smithfield Meat Market. We had helped him with his



Ray Buckton with two other general secretaries – Derrick Fullick and Neil Milligan

education and he'd ended up taking a degree at Cambridge.

THE FIRST AGREEMENT

The outcome was that Ray Buckton and I set out for Oxford for a meeting with my old pupil. 'What would you say if we asked you for day-release for BR union representatives?' asked Ray. 'Why don't you ask me?' retorted Len. A few hours later we had an agreement for a three-year course on Industrial Relations, with pay, for 24 two-hour meetings a year.

As tutor and lecturer for the course I chose my colleague Jim Fyrth, a Senior Tutor in History and Economics. They were a great success and Jim became well-known in ASLEF circles. In the 1970s he led a group of ASLEF reps to Moscow to meet their Russian equivalents.

Unfortunately Jim died a few weeks ago. We held a commemorative meeting for him but we'd sadly lost touch with ASLEF activists from that period. It was Jim's death that led me to write this article.

COURSES AND EXPANSION

The agreement Ray and I had made applied to all BR unions so I spoke to Jimmy Knapp at the National Union of Railwaymen and shortly later I began to tutor a course for his members. Later Jimmy invited me to address his executive committee about education, and I recommended that, in addition to the three-year course, we set up a correspondence course for reps and the NUR opened a residential centre.

At the first meeting to which ASLEF members were invited, members from London Transport turned up. We had no agreement with LT about release, but we quickly

remedied this, emerging from talks with an agreement for a ten-meeting course. These proved so successful that we followed them up with a residential week and attendance at the University's two-week summer school.

The university also got involved with the TUC, in providing health and safety courses for ASLEF members. I remember being shown around stations, including going underneath an escalator, as I was introduced to working conditions on the railway.

FOND MEMORIES

All of this was the result of the meeting I'd been invited to in Folkestone in 1968!

I'd like to share one more ASLEF story if I may. A dozen ASLEF members were at one of our summer schools during the time of the 'flexible rostering' dispute. Before long we'd adapted the tune of 'Waltzing Matilda' and I remember the whole university school singing out

*'Flexible rostering, flexible rostering
Who'd like to flexible roster with me?*

And we all sing out when we're standing on the picket line

Who'd like to flexibly roster with me?

Now, at the age of 90, I look back on those days fondly and with pride. Union education was a seed that has grown into an important part of ASLEF's work. I wonder if there are still ASLEF members who remember our collaboration?

**Don't let it cost
you your job!**





Signs of activity on level crossings



**- an update by
National Organiser
Simon Weller**

WHEN I was at a Norwich branch meeting recently a health and safety rep for NXEA asked about the possibility of the union's head office collating reports on incidents or near-misses at level crossings across the country. We looked at the idea, but felt that it would be an immense amount of work to put onto headquarters staff to no great purpose – because the information is already to hand. If reps want to find out about the number of actual/near miss incidents, then they should be able to get the information from management at the Joint Safety Committee (JSC). East Midland Trains are taking the lead on the issue and are actively encouraging drivers to report near misses.

Responsibility for level crossing safety rests with Network Rail and the TOCs/FOCS, and they have a duty to collate the data via the RSSB Safety Management Information System (SMIS) database. Because of our growing concern about crossings, we held a meeting with Network Rail last month to discuss how trade unions can play a part in level crossing safety campaigns – not only train unions but also those active in the big utility companies.

We are encouraging unions like the Communication Workers, Unite and the GMB to become involved by raising level crossing safety both with their managements and their members as part of a 'driving at work' policy. At the same time, Network Rail is raising the issue with managers in the utility companies.

Our general secretary Keith Norman raised one measure which Network Rail responded to in a positive way. Keith questioned the way that data on traffic flows at level crossings is gathered. Instead of the rather amateur way this

is currently undertaken, he suggested that they could use the same type of equipment that local authorities use to count traffic at, for example, pedestrian crossings. A temporary cable is laid across the road, and the number of vehicles passing over it are automatically recorded.

In a railway context this would be a vast improvement on the current method of collecting data. Keith said, 'The current process seems to be that someone goes out for an hour or two on a wet Sunday afternoon – and then reports that there is minimum traffic!'. Network Rail undertook to look at the proposal in detail and said they are using automatic counters on gates at foot path crossings in a trial on the Sussex route.

ASLEF has also responded to the Law Commission's review of level crossing legislation with four main points

- that level crossings should be replaced as soon as possible
- penalties should be increased for misuse by road users
- the law should be changed to make it easier to close crossings; and
- no more should be built.

DIRECTION FROM NETWORK RAIL

Network Rail's newly appointed Director of Operational Services, Dyan Crowther, told me that improving safety at level crossings is her top priority. She said, 'We are carrying out a complete review of level crossing management. This includes everything from risk assessment, maintenance and inspection processes, the time and cost of delivering safety improvements, collaboration with stakeholders and better communication to better data quality and reporting.' And she added that, 'The driver community is absolutely key to this.'

She has promised that, 'We are going to improve our current processes and drive down this risk. One of the ways we can do this is through harnessing all of the local knowledge

out there. First of all we need to build confidence amongst our key partners and demonstrate that we are very serious about our commitment to achieve something that benefits the whole industry, passengers, and public and private level crossing users.'

USING DRIVERS' EXPERTISE

She said that tapping into the knowledge that drivers have, and finding a better way of capturing this, is really important, but added, 'We need to go further and make sure that drivers can see the benefits of reporting. At the moment, a lot of valuable information may appear to go into a black hole. This is clearly not acceptable. We will change this perception and do better.'

Dyan says the first step in this process is having formal meetings with ASLEF, other unions and the TOCs. 'We want to make drivers part of the risk assessment process. They know where the problems and risks are and they probably have lots of good ideas of ways to stop



or reduce incidents of misuse. Understanding the risk and having a more accurate local risk profile is critical to any safety strategy.'

It was encouraging to hear her say that Network Rail intends to 'go into depots to work with drivers and managers. We'll be asking, 'What locations make you nervous, and why?' and sharing information to see if it feels right to the staff that know the route.

'Gathering accurate data on usage is difficult at many locations, so we need other professional input. This is just part of the process, demonstrating that this is being used effectively is equally vital.'

DEVELOPING NEW STRATEGIES

Dyan also insists that the current national review of level crossing management will not end with a report on a desk somewhere. 'It will be used to develop a new five year strategy to reduce risk,' she says. 'It will be published in the New Year, with real targets, metrics, and delivery times. Closing crossings on main lines has to be a priority, especially unprotected crossings. Getting rid of 'open' and station footpath crossings is also high on the agenda for the new proposal.'

She says, 'RSSB data shows that the level of misuse and corresponding risk is not falling – in spite of there being relatively few collisions and fatal incidents on our network. It may surprise many to look at comparisons across Europe and to see that the safety record in this country is rated as the best. One collision or fatal incident is one too many but the numbers are still small.'

NEW TECHNOLOGY IS A PRIORITY

We were also encouraged to hear Dyan say that the development of technological solutions is a high priority for Network Rail. Speaking of one solution pushed by ASLEF, she says, 'The current project to pinpoint the location of trains in long sections and improve communication between signaller and user is high up on the list. Power Operated Gate Openers at User Worked Crossings – to stop gates being left open – are already being used. Lower cost barriers that can be retro fitted to Automatic Open Crossings are

being developed. An Object Detection system is also being trialled. These are commonly used in countries like Japan and Israel.'

Further, the development of fixed red light enforcement cameras at crossings, and mobile units, or level crossing camera enforcement vehicles, similar to those used on motorways by traffic police, is being progressed. The first dedicated level crossing enforcement van goes live later this month.

THE PUBLIC'S BEHAVIOUR NEEDS TO CHANGE

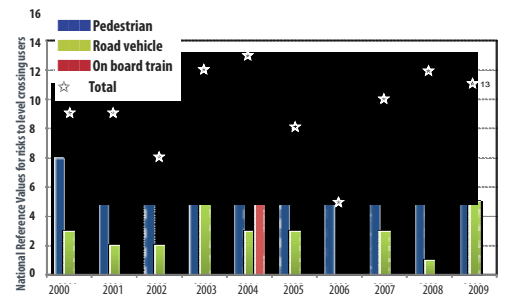
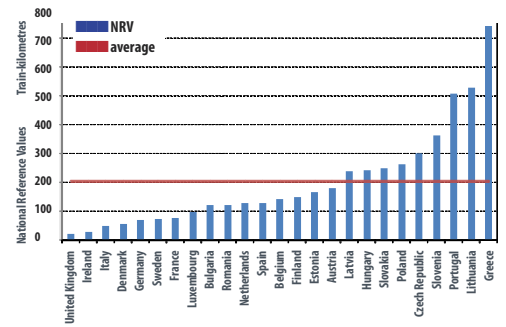
Dyan, however, is also adamant that vital to any improvement is a change in the behaviour of the public which, she says, 'accounts for over 95% of incidents.' 'It sounds incredible, but many drivers still claim to be confused by the meaning of 'flashing reds' or exactly when they should stop. Public safety campaigns, education and enforcement, are all important factors, but giving users the tools to change their behaviour is just as important.'

Network Rail is currently running a pilot project with the Royal Mail – with its fleet of over 50,000 vehicles – to improve understanding and behaviour among its staff. It's being treated as an important internal safety culture change initiative with briefings and information going out to all staff. The intention is to roll out this service to all corporate users.

'Another project under consideration is to have location data of crossings available on satellite navigation systems. Garmin have been helping us to develop this. The idea is that road vehicle drivers will be alerted by an audible alert as they approach a crossing. An alternative route selection feature will also be available to enable drivers to avoid crossings, congestion, frustration and delays.'

THE SIDE OF THE ROAD

In addition to the rail side, and the user side, there is a third element – the road side. This is an area that is also being worked on to develop a greater share of responsibilities. Road control measures can be extremely effective. They can include reducing speed limits, improving



signage and warning times by making approaches more striking visually, or by installing rumble strips, chicanes, or reflective devices. Network Rail says it is progressing this via road-rail partnership groups.

Dyan Crowther is under no illusion that she has an easy task before her. 'The issue is extremely complex. Basically we have been left a 200-year-old legacy that has to fit into modern demands and regulations. We would like to close over 6,500 level crossings but we have little authority to do so. The agreement of numerous interested parties is often required to close a crossing. There are groups that object to almost every proposal to close or divert crossings and even when agreement is reached, it may take two years to complete.'

It was refreshing to find that Network Rail now at least concedes that 'the active involvement of ASLEF members in this is critical' and wants us to be 'a part of the solution'. We will work with Network Rail to set up the necessary processes and framework to get the best out of this relationship. It's not just important that we succeed. It is vital.



Employee directors? There's Nunn better ..!

Dave Nunn is one of a very small breed – a rail employee director. Each of the First Group's companies has them – in Scotrail, First Great Western, First Capital Connect and First Pennine Express, where Dave works. When he came to London for a meeting, **Chris Proctor** met him at King Cross to find out more ...

DAVE NUNN's York to Kings Cross train is an hour and a half late, victim of the first snow of the winter. He strolls up the platform, shakes hands warmly and looks around highly unimpressed at the massed ranks squeezed onto the concourse. 'I like coming to London,' he says. 'For about an hour!'

Dave's a York man through and through. It's where he was born, where he lives and where he started on the railway, working for British Rail as a drivers' assistant. After eight years, as a relief driver, he moved to Darlington for three years before transferring back to York as a driver.

'I'm the first member of our family to work on the railways,' he says. 'The choice in those days was the railways or Rowntrees. It was an easy choice for me. Trains always fascinated me as a young lad. I was a bit of a spotter.'

Instead of watching from the outside, he now sits in the cab of trains running from across the country from Liverpool to Scarborough and Middlesbrough. Does he enjoy the job? 'A heck of a site more driving 185 units than those awful 142's,' he says. 'I feel sorry for the drivers who are stuck with them – especially on a day like today.'

Dave was vice-chairman of ASLEF's York Branch for a number of years but had to step down when Transpennine's 1,000-odd



The employees' way into the company board – Dave Nunn is the employee director at Transpennine Express

employees voted him the company's employee director. 'I still go to branch meetings when shifts allow,' he says. 'I think it's important to be involved in the union and I'm always surprised that so few people turn up. I suppose it's because so many drivers live outside the city boundaries now. Years ago everyone lived within a few miles of the depot. And the union used to be more of a social community. We come from all kinds of different backgrounds today whereas railway workers used to have trains running through their veins.'

'I blame Thatcher, of course.' Then he adds with a smile, 'Actually, I blame her for most things!'

“ If a problem is bogged down in middle-management I can talk to someone at the top ”

Transpennine Express (TPE) is part of the First Group which has invited its staff to elect employee directors since 1994. 'I thought it sounded a good idea,' Dave says. 'It's fascinating to see what it takes to run a railway – and was an opportunity to find out and to do something for my fellow workers.'

Dave topped the poll three years ago. 'I wrote a resume that went round all staff and I was lucky enough to get the job.'

'I suppose drivers have an advantage because we get round and a lot of people know us – although I'm not sure that's necessarily an advantage! It also gives the opportunity to chat to a range of people which is what you need to do as an employee director. I hoped I'd get elected but I tend to be 'sceptimistic' so I'm not disappointed if things



'My motivations are to minimise conflict in the industry and improve the job for everyone who works here.'

don't work out.'

As an employee director Dave attends meetings of the company's board and committees like the safety management and assaults working groups as well as ad hoc meetings like those discussing staff surveys or ID cards. 'The board meets in the big boardroom on the seventh floor of Bridgewater House in Manchester, but it has a surprisingly informal atmosphere – although it is sometimes presided over by Mary Grant, the Head of Rail.'

'I'm treated as any other member. I put in written reports of what I've been up to the previous month and I'm often asked how I think staff would react to a proposal. 'What would they say?' they ask me. I think it's all very positive. It means managers understand staff concerns before they come up with proposals. There's no point in having conflict you don't need.'

Dave says one benefit is that when staff in any grade ask him a question he always knows, if not the answer, the person he can get a response from. 'If a problem is bogged down in middle-management I can talk to someone at the top, so that at least they are aware of a potential difficulty.'

He says that he never felt intimidated at meetings with the other board members – the result, he says, of being a train driver. 'We meet

people from all walks of life and we're a generally confident bunch,' he says. 'No one intimidates a train driver!'

Dave likes the sense of comradeship of the profession, and enjoys dropping in on the retired drivers who meet 'at the Institute' on Fridays. 'A couple of them are in their '80s. They're from Devon and Cornwall – and I swear their accents get broader by the day!'

I ask if the employee director role doesn't in some way seek to replace the union, but Dave is emphatic that the roles are different. 'For a start no one man can replace the collective and democratic approach of a union,' he says. 'And I'm not advocating things for members. My input is to prepare management for how staff might react to their plans.'

Dave says the experience has been interesting for him because it's given him an insight into the whole working of a railway. 'You tend to see it from your own specialist point of view. I only thought of the effects on drivers, for example. But now I see how everyone has their own part to play – ticketing, office, admin and conductors.'

But for all that, Dave's still convinced that driving is the best job in the business. 'I don't even complain about doing shifts!' he says. 'After 30 years, I suppose I've got used to it. Besides, I like having days off in mid-week. The race-courses aren't so full, for one thing! In fact, there's a group of us drivers going to Donny races in a week or so.'

Is that one of your interests? I enquire. 'My wife says I don't have interests. She says I have obsessions!'

Apart from horses, Dave enjoys motor-bikes and music. 'I like all sorts of music – so long as it's punk!' he chuckles. 'The wife says it's ruddy

nonsense!' His favourite musician is Frank Zappa and his top band is Motorhead. 'I go to all-dayers to see them with other drivers I've known for years, who live all over the country now. But that's the pleasure of train driving. There are links you don't lose and friendships that are long-lasting.'

When he moved onto talking about motor bikes I begin to sympathise with Mrs Nunn. I have seldom seen such enthusiasm for a Triumph Sprint ST 1050 or a Yamaha RD 250.

“ **It's an opportunity to find out and to do something for my fellow workers** ”

'There are two types of people,' Dave explains. 'Proper ones who like motorbikes, and the rest!' And he sets off about how pleased he is that one in every six bikes sold in the UK last year was a Triumph and that Norton has started building bikes again ...

His full life has included a stint as a parish councillor. 'I suppose it's the sort of person I am. I can't stand sitting moaning at home. I just thought 'I pay my council tax so I want a say on how it's spent.' I like to get involved.'

There's another election for the employee director again next year and Dave says he'll be standing again. 'I think it's a useful job and I've enjoyed doing it. It supplements the job the union does, and hopefully helps to make work a better place for us all.'



Dave was in London for a meeting with the employee directors of other First Group companies in the UK

Would you be prepared to be featured in future editions of this column, or know someone who would be a good subject? If you do, please let us know at the ASLEF Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB or journal@aslef.org.uk

A HUNDRED YEARS OF UNION

The January 1911 ASLEF Locomotive Journal included a report on a miners' strike in Aberdare, a plea for no one to speak to the driver of a train and a complaint that shunters encouraged SPADs ...

STRIKE IN ABERDARE
H.Parfitt, the Organising Secretary, reported ...

"I also visited Aberdare, inquiring into the position of our members in view of the probable slackness of work during the miners' dispute. I am glad to say that they have not fared so badly up to the present...but the position of the mining population of the Aberdare Valley, and those dependent upon them, is a deplorable one – men, women

and children are being supplied with food through various charitable institutions, destitution being the order of the day. Children are being fed twice a day in the schools, and men of known respectability and sobriety are to be seen going to the soup kitchens for something to keep themselves and their wives alive. To those who ask – why this sudden poverty of a class of men who have been supposed to be earning such high wages, the

answer is – that they have been working for a considerable time under such grinding conditions that their resources were exhausted when they came out on strike, and to make matters worse, they are not getting strike pay, as they came out without the sanction of their fellow trade unionists. "

SILENCE IN THE CAB
A letter from EXCELSIOR in the January 1911 Journal read ...

"Don't speak to the man at the wheel" is a notice found displayed on board ship, and it would be a wise and economical plan if our authorities on the railway would insist on a similar notice being carried out; except in cases of necessary information which have to be given to drivers. I venture to assert that if this was carried out

in years to come we should not see the haggard and careworn look which is so apparent among engine-drivers, and would also tend to reduce the number of accidents. ...

SPADS AND SHUNTERS

"...The rules of the company state that you must have a signal before you move a train; if a shunter is too dilatory or too careless to give one, and if there is a workman injured or killed, how are we to escape? It is reasonable that we should escape. But let a driver demand a signal in all cases and I am here to state that his pathway of duty on the railway would be one of hard plodding uphill work."

○ **Extracts selected and edited by Jane Pimlott**

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DANIEL EDWARDS TRAGIC DEATH ON WAY TO WORK

IT IS with deepest regret that we announce the sad passing of Cambridge Driver Daniel Edwards, who died tragically in a road traffic accident whilst on his way to work on 23 November last year.

Daniel started his railway career as a Driver at Grove Park depot in 2001, before moving to Bedford in 2007. He transferred to Cambridge's First Capital Connect depot in 2008. In his short time at Cambridge, Daniel soon became a popular figure at the depot and will be sadly missed by all who knew him. Our thoughts go out to all his family, especially his expectant wife Mary and young son Morgan.

Cambridge Branch

RON HOWELL, QUICK WITTED TONBRIDGE MAN

RON HOWELL passed away last year. He began his career at Tunbridge Wells before coming to Tonbridge. He was well known for his fast wit. No room stayed quiet long after Ron arrived!

REG WILSON WORKED THE FAMOUS TRAINS

REG WILSON, who was born in 1938, joined the railway on 29 December 1953 as an engine cleaner at Colwick Loco Shed. He was promoted to Regular Fireman on 5 September 1955 and on 2 March 1959 he moved to Kings Cross where he remained until his retirement in 2003.

Reg's father was a signalman at Gedling Colliery.

Reg worked on all the famous trains, like the Flying Scotsman, Yorkshire Pullman

and the Elizabethan. He passed with flying colours the firing of the non-stopper that ran from Kings Cross to Edinburgh (changing over en-route just past York) – which was the real test of a fireman.

He later passed out as driver on the diesels and electric and carried out main line work until he retired.

So to Reg's two daughters Diane and Deborah (Deborah works at Bounds Green Depot), three grandchildren - Luke, Sian and Adam - and



great-granddaughter Grace, we send our condolences. Unfortunately Reg's wife Georgina sadly passed away two year ago. May they both RIP.

Peter Smith, Reporter, RMS and Kings Cross

He once showed me a 'lost time' ticket that he had received. His reply was that due to bottles, earth, tins and other commodities he was unable to maintain steam pressure!

This was at the time when all the coal stacks were being used up at the end of

steam. Needless to say, he did not receive a reply!

We will miss this loyal member and our thoughts are with his family at this time. May he rest in peace

Dave Weddle, Reporter, RMS Tonbridge

Ian zooms off into the sunset!

THE Cross Country Company Council would like to record its gratitude, respect and best wishes to Ian Clarke who recently retired from the industry aged 65.

Ian's railway career started on 8 April 1963 when he was 17 years old. He was passed for driving in 1968 and appointed a driver in 1982. Always based at Saltley, Ian moved to Birmingham New Street in 1995 with his Cross Country colleagues.

In 2000 Ian became a member of the Cross Country Company Council replacing the late Carl Dutton. He

served a full ten years on the Company Council and played a major role in negotiations such as DRI2, Harmonisation of XC and ex-Central Drivers and Relocation packages. He was ASLEF's representative on the CC Pensions Committee for nine years, including two spells as Chairman.

Ian will be able to spend more time with his wife Dianne and four grown-up children - not to mention the recent addition of several grandchildren.

Ian always intended to 'zoom off

into the sunset' on the beloved Harley Davidson he acquired three years ago. However after only clocking up 68 miles, it seems Dianne doesn't share this vision!

We're sure that all members at Birmingham and Longsight will join the serving Company Council in thanking Ian and his family – and wishing him a long and happy retirement.

Dave Sullivan, John Hay, Miles Bidgood, Nigel Ryder and Jim Ball



Ian at ASLEF's head office

Active Jubilee bid farewell to Carmie



Jubilee branch – 'a good man down!'

IT'S always sad to see a stalwart member of the branch retire – but the Jubilee branch has lost the popular figure of Bro Carmie Thompson from LUL. He came along to a recent meeting to be presented with a clock from branch secretary Gary Comfort – and the best wishes of the Branch for his future.

Although it has been sometime since the last branch report in the Journal, we have continued to be extremely active, closely questioning the train Functional and Safety Council members who report to the Branch, as well as our EC member, Terry Wilkinson on some of the decisions made by the bodies they serve on.

We've also had regular reports from the

Medway Trades Council, including the latest developments concerning the arrangements for the Olympics, the rallies against this government's cuts and the fight against school Academies.

The Branch has also decided to set up its own electronic magazine and Gary Comfort is currently organising the first edition - which should be available via email shortly.

Another major decision of the branch was to set up a press officer to deal with the local press because it is felt that the general public do not always get a fair understanding of the Society's stand in some of the actions currently going on within LUL.

Finally best wishes to all ASLEF members who have survived the season of good will!!

Mike Beck, Reporter, Jubilee East branch

A splendid send off for respected Mike

On 6 November Edinburgh No 1 Branch descended in numbers on Inveresk Bowling to say farewell to Bro Mike Burgess.

Mike, who recently retired on medical grounds after 36 years service, received a fantastic turnout for his leaving party. Ex-Millerhill drivers from Cross Country and Freightliner turned up, as well as a few of the 'auld yins'!! It was great to see Specky Leckie and Watty Bell still looking so well in their 80's; it was like a scene from Still Game as they reminisced with Pushy, Kenny Davis and Dodger McGeachy about the good old days!

The numbers at The Hill have decreased dramatically over the past few years; but as Branch Secretary, I was so proud to see how many drivers turned up for Mike, as well as the amount of money we collected for Mike's retirement gift. It proved once again that as a depot and a branch, we look after our own.



Gary Hart presenting Mike with his retirement certificate

Mike has been a proud ASLEF member for 36 years; always taking an active part in the branch. Mike was never scared to speak his mind, which is one of the reasons he was so respected at Millerhill. He also passed on a lot of his expansive railway knowledge onto the younger drivers in his role as a minder driver.



The clans of Edinburgh No1 who gathered to wish Mike Burgess farewell

On behalf of the branch, I'd like to wish Mike and his family all the best for the future. Enjoy your retirement mate; with all the spare time you've got now, your darts and bowls might improve a wee bit!

Gary Hart, Secretary, Edinburgh No.1 Branch



WILLIE FLETCHER'S 46 YEARS OF SERVICE RECOGNISED

During a visit to Arkwright Road by the Edinburgh No 2 branch, Keith Norman presented a retirement certificate to Willie Fletcher to mark his completing 46 years on the railway.

Thanks from the Pancs

On behalf of St Pancras branch, I'd like to thank Keith Norman, Alan Donnelly, Mick Whelan and Dave Calfe for coming to our yearly badge presentation branch meeting in October. A good time was had by all, and Keith's words and time were much appreciated as we celebrated all lengths of ASLEF membership from 5 years to 35.

It's often said that the younger members and 'second career' drivers aren't sympathetic or loyal to trade unionism – but that's not true. Interest levels and activism vary whatever the age or service history. Drivers don't conform to the traditional background any more, but that doesn't mean that new or younger members don't join the union. They do. I believe the mix of the old-style and the new is beneficial, because it helps ASLEF to evolve and keep on top of our changing industry.

Rebekah Peterson, Secretary, St Pancras branch

Steve West - 23 years as Farnham Branch Secretary

Steve West recently resigned from his position of Secretary of the union's Farnham branch – after serving in the post for 23 years.

He has had two presentations made to him in recognition of what is possibly a record length of time as a branch secretary.

At the Farnham Branch meeting EC member Marz Colombini presented Steve with a replica loco made from coal on behalf of the national executive. Farnham Branch members followed by giving Steven a



Steve stands next to GS Keith Norman (far right) with Marz Colombini and Martin Warrick

hand-crafted walking stick for him to use in his hobby of organising and participating in walks.

The October meeting of District

Council No1 also honoured Steve's remarkable service by awarding him a tankard, pen-set, the new-style ASLEF plate and a District No1 tie. They were

presented at the meeting by General Secretary Keith Norman.

Martin Warrick, Farnham District Council No1 delegate

At the recent Llandudno branch Brother Nigel Forrest was presented with a 30-year badge. District Organiser Bro Colin Smith and Bro Richie Cash, the Arriva Trains Wales company council chair, were in attendance to celebrate Nigel's service and to give reports which were accepted by the branch



915 years service celebrated at Bristol Branch



THE November meeting of Bristol Branch was indeed a special occasion as a number of members were presented with their long service badges.

The normal branch business was dealt with earlier in the day so that the presentations could take place without any delay. No one could remember the last time that the General Secretary, the National Organiser and the EC President all attended the same branch meeting. The membership were particularly pleased to see the General Secretary, especially so soon after the major operation which he had only a few months previously.

Before the presentations the General Secretary gave a 'state of the nation speech' which went down very well. Keith mentioned various subjects including the healthy state of ASLEF's finances, RMT propaganda, mobile phones

in cabs and the effect of the recession on the rail industry. Simon Weller, the National Organiser and Alan Donnelly, the EC President also made contributions. District Organiser, Stan Moran along with EC members Brian Corbett, Nigel Gibson and Marz Colombini were also in attendance.

To loud acclamation, the General Secretary then made long service badge presentations to Andy Hudd (5 years) Nick Crew (10 years) M. Stokes (15 years) Mark Cook (20 years) Neil Geeson (25 years) Steve Nicholls (25 years) and Mark Harvey (25 years)

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who attended - especially our General Secretary and guests. You all contributed to a brilliant and memorable night!

Bernard Kennedy,
Secretary, Bristol Branch

Branch out for Tony's retirement!

IN October we organised a retirement drink and buffet for Tony Martin, a Line Controller for the Northern Line, at the Weatherspoons at Baker Street.

Tony has been an ASLEF member for nearly 35 years, joining the West Brompton Branch as a guard on the District Line. He served as a branch officer, including being the West Brompton branch secretary, for many years.

Tony worked as a driver on the District, Piccadilly, Central and Northern Lines before taking promotion and eventually becoming a line controller, a position which he occupied on several lines before settling down on the Northern.

It was nice to meet old colleagues, ex drivers and management, particularly from the Jubilee Line, at the function and talk about old times. Tony hopes to set up a photography business with his partner and everybody wished them well in their new venture.

Mike Beck, West Brompton branch

Upcoming events

STRATFORD REUNION 29 JANUARY

The Stratford Depot reunion will be held on Saturday 29 January in the Railway Tavern, Angel Lane, Stratford from 19.00 until late. Everyone is welcome. If you need any further information please contact Barry Moore on 07900-132192 or by email Barry.Moore@dbschenker.com If anyone wants to stay at the Railway Tavern please contact Jan or Tom directly on 020 8534 3123, through info@railwaytavernhotel.co.uk or by visiting the hotel website which is www.railwaytavernhotel.co.uk

A welcome visit, a deserved badge

ON behalf of the Brighton branch I'd like to thank everyone at Arkwright Road for making us so welcome when we visited the union's head office last November.

Dave Bennett led us on an informative tour of the building, the EC interrupted their meeting to welcome us and General Secretary Keith Norman made the day even more special by finding time to present a 50 year medallion to branch member Bro John Osborne. National Organiser Simon Weller, also a Brighton branch member, said, 'John is a former local representative of long standing who guided Brighton depot through the sectorisation of the 1980s and privatisation of the 1990s and 2000s. He's a railwayman through and through, and his



John Osborne receives his 50 year medallion from General Secretary Keith Norman

legacy continues as his son works as a driver with First Capital Connect.'

Perhaps I should also mention the exceptional hospitality laid on at the local hostelry!

Thanks for a great day.
Mark Johnson, Secretary, Brighton branch



Brighton stepping up at head office! Pictured are (front left to right) Bro S. Chatfield, Bro D Eaton, Bro J Osborne, Sis C Visser, Bro P Edwards (Middle left to right) Bro S Jones and Bro I Wilson (Back left to right) Bro M Johnson and Bro P Herrey



These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the **ASLEF Journal at 9 Arkwright Road London NW3 6AB** or by email to **journal@aslef.org.uk**. Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can. This month we continue our **STAR LETTER feature**. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!



COST SAVING COSTS MONEY

AS A retired Underground Train Driver/Operator, I feel aggrieved that some 'oik' has come up with a bright idea to save money for TFL. It is, he says, unfair that 14,000 or so non-operating people (including pensioners and dependants) are given free travel on TFL.

I'd remind him that when I joined London Transport, as it was then, I signed up to conditions that included free travel both on and off duty,

Well I'm definitely off duty now – and besides if I didn't get a free pass from LUL, I would use a Freedom Pass, which is paid for by London Councils. So this would involve more expense, not less!

Kevin Christie, retired member, West Brompton

KEEP THE SLEEPER AT EXETER

CERTAIN candidates for ASLEF representative positions at Exeter seem to be constantly looking at ways of ridding the depot of its core work – the night sleeper service. The high speed link at Exeter has a small establishment and is famous throughout Great Western for having a fairly high proportion of night work in the high speed link.

Exeter is also well known for being the sole main line operator of the night sleeper service between Paddington and Penzance (apart from the down direction part between Plymouth and Penzance which is diagrammed to Plymouth depot.) We are all well aware of the fatigue issues induced by the 0100 book-on time when rostered on turns 40 and 41. This requires the driver to work the sleeper to Paddington and then take the 0700 train from Paddington to Bristol TM.

You can dress it up all you like, but it all boils down to fitness for duty.

Fatigue will set in after four hours continuous driving whatever time of the day or night. However on turns EX40 and 41 it is a requirement to get some quality rest prior to taking the duty due to the content of the turn combined with the early book on.

Certain union candidates are constantly hammering home to management the view

PLAYING A PART IN THE PARISH

IT IS good to know that train drivers are carrying on the tradition of taking part in politics at a local level (Neil Castle article, November Journal).

I joined my village parish council a year ago now and I thoroughly enjoy attending its meetings twice a month. While not being independent I like to think that I am impartial and I always try to make decisions that will help to make our village a better place and its inhabitants more content. But yes,

there are always people who are never happy - and they certainly make being a councillor lively and interesting!

After a year on the council I can say that I have little idea of the other members' politics, which I suppose says a lot about the professional way they maintain their impartiality.

Keep the tradition alive - and join your parish council!

Steve Woodhouse, Driver, Norwich

that, after receiving feedback from Exeter drivers, this turn is unsafe and an alternative must be sought – or they should 'get shot' of the duty.

We have productive mainline depots either side of us who between them have the relevant route and traction knowledge to cut Exeter out of the sleeper operation altogether. This could put jobs at risk.

The question needs to be asked, 'Do you want a depot at Exeter or not?'

If you want to work permanent day shifts, then do us all a favour and go and work in the ticket office (where you might notice a change in your salary!) It used to be management who forced changes that significantly changed our working environment, - but this time we feel we're at risk from our own.

Very Cheesed Off, Exeter Driver

THANKS FOR ELECTION BACKING

I WOULD like to thank the drivers at Cambridge, Kings Lynn and Peterborough for their support in the recent First Capital Connect (FCC) Company Council election.

I would also like to thank the Kings Cross drivers for their support over the past three years and to reassure them, along with all FCC drivers that despite being elected by three depots, that when it comes to representing drivers, the emphasis is on the word 'company' - and that means every driver, irrespective of

depot.

Interesting times lie ahead for us all and I am looking forward to all the challenges that this will bring.

Peter Emmington, FCC Company Council

DON'T TOUCH THE FAMILY!

I READ in the November ASLEF Journal that Mr Boris Johnson and the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) are calling for legislation relating to strikes to be made tougher. The Mayor has called on the Prime Minister to introduce new laws preventing unions from taking industrial action.

Dream on, Mr Johnson! ASLEF members for one would not stand for it. We are one family.

Ralph Cooper, by email

THE KIND HEARTS OF ASLEF MEMBERS

AS I approach the two-year anniversary of an accident I sustained when I wasn't at work, I wanted to write a few things about our union.

In January 2009 I was struck by a car whilst I crossed the road at a pedestrian crossing. The driver failed to stop at a red light. I suffered severe bruising, grazing and sustained a back injury.

In December 2009 I was reduced to zero pay in line with the company policy. I went to relying on £62 a week (Employment and

Support Allowance). At the same time my wife lost her job: so things were very bad for us.

As soon as Nigel Mack and Bernard Kennedy heard of the seriousness of our financial problems, they, out of the kindness of their hearts, arranged a collection from the Didcot staff. Six weeks later, I was in receipt of over £600.

Things didn't stop there, Bernard approached the ASLEF Hardship Fund and a cheque was sent out to me. Then Nigel (who at that point wasn't even our branch secretary) wrote to all the branches. The response was truly amazing.

Not only did the money collected from the branches totally overwhelm me and my wife, but the messages of support from people I'd never met before were incredible. We cannot thank every branch secretary enough. You do an amazing job... Thank You!!

I'm now back at work, driving trains and enjoying the company of my workmates.

Now to the main point of my article. Like a lot of people I wondered what my union was doing for me. I always thought of it, as the phrase goes, as 'an expensive diary'.

After my experience I now realise that ASLEF is us, the members, the most kind-hearted members. ASLEF has saved us from losing everything. It is the best union in the world, made up of the best members in the world.

Finally I would like to thank Nigel Mack and

Bernard Kennedy. I am so grateful for all the work you guys did. You will never know how much it meant to us.

Martin Davis, Didcot Driver

SHIFTS IN WORK-LIFE BALANCE

I COULD not disagree more with the arguments put forward by Brother Nigel Gibson regarding so-called flexible working (Opinion, November Journal) And before anyone makes accusations, I am not speaking from a management point of view - but rather I hope a common sense one.

As train drivers we are employed to drive passenger trains, ECS or freight to a 24-hour time-table. This involves us working shifts which may or may not suit us all. Personally, I find that working nights greatly assists my home life. As my wife works full time I can catch up on the house-work in the afternoon and do the evening school run. I achieve this by doing what my father, grand-father, great-grand-father and uncle did during their combined 176 years footplate service - finding a mutual exchange of duty with a colleague.

Of course we should fight for and protect colleagues who need accommodation turns due to medical or serious personal issues. But we must all work to a roster compiled by our own elected ASLEF representatives and not allow each driver, under the pretext of this

absurd work-life balance, to choose their shifts and turns. This would create unfairness and ultimately break our greatest strength: our solidarity.

I find Brother Gibson's remark 'men covered in coal dust and sweat' offensive in the context he used it. We should never forget our ancestors or our past. Brother Gibson should look no further than the name or indeed the badge of the union he is privileged to represent.

I come from a long family history of train drivers and should my daughter wish to follow in our footsteps, as a proud father she will have my full support. But should the turns/shifts not suit, then I will tell her to look for a swap - or find another career!

Mick Humphrys, Euston Driver Assessor

THANKS FROM RMS

COULD I, through the pages of the Journal, express my thanks to the ASLEF Retired Members' Section officials and committee members for the weekend forum at Scalby and the Certificate of Attendance to mark the last RMS annual meeting at Arkwright Road.

I'd like to give a special mention to Peter Smith for the work he put in on both occasions.

Colin Corcoran, retired member, Manchester

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FAVERSHAM BRANCH (077) has finally launched its 25th Anniversary ASLEF/NUM badge. They cost £10 each including P&P. A few Faversham Branch Centenary badges remain

available at £5 each including P&P. To order please contact the Branch Secretary, Steve Gurdler, 18 Hunters Way West, Chatham, Kent ME5 7HL. steve.gurdler@aslefonline.co.uk or 07941 110473



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NXEA 2009 STRIKE BADGE commemorating solidarity of ASLEF members. Purchase (£3 plus p&p) from NXEA Branch Secretary or District Council 5 Secretary. Contact M Steele on 07788 153954, 1 Rosecroft, South Wootton, Kings Lynn Norfolk PE30 3WX. Proceeds to District Council 5 Education Fund and ASLEF Fighting Fund.



BRIGHTON ASLEF DRIVERS BADGE. Limited Edition of 300. All profits to fund branch reunions. Available for £10 including p&p (cheques made payable to 'ASLEF Brighton Branch No 35') from Mark Johnson, 51 Drove Road, Portslade, Brighton BN41 2PA or phone 07783 847228.

Railman Joe's Golden moments



In the days of steam railways, Joe Galibardy, now 95-years-old, was a member of the legendary Indian hockey team that beat Germany 8-1 in front of Adolf Hitler at the 1936 Olympics. Here he shares his amazing story with Alf Martin ...

AS THE 2012 Olympics get ever nearer, Joe Galibardy has a twinkle in his eye as he recounts how, aged 21, at the 1936 Olympic Games he helped send Adolf Hitler home in fury.

The 95-year-old, whose full name is Joseph Deville Thomas Galibardy, was part of the legendary Indian hockey team that conquered all at the 1936 Berlin Olympics.

Born in Madras in 1915, Joe was the eldest of four children and at school he got into trouble for running away. His father, who was a train driver, decided Joe should be sent to a famous boarding school in the Himalayas where, at the age of 13, he learned to play hockey.

He first came to prominence in 1935, playing for Bengal Nagpur Railways and was chosen for the Indian hockey team in the position of left half in 1936. The team, believed to be the best ever to grace the game, arrived at the Olympics as the hot favourites after winning gold medals in 1928 and 1932.

'We had only been in Germany for four hours when the German team asked us to play a friendly game which we thought was a qualifier,' exclaims Joe. 'We'd only had lunch an hour earlier but we went and fetched our equipment and they beat us 4-1.'

In the early rounds India beat Japan 9-0,

Hungary 4-0 and the USA 7-0. In the semi-final they thrashed France 10-0.

'When we got to the final with Germany it was totally different to the friendly,' says Joe, 'because we had some very clever forwards and the Germans could not cope with us.'

'We scored 10 goals but two were disallowed. We were 6-1 up against Germany in front of spectators Adolf Hitler, Joseph Goebbels and Herman Goering when Hitler made his excuses and left. Our captain was Dhyhan Chand, a prolific goal-scorer who was a major in the British Army. Hitler was so taken with him he offered him German citizenship and to promote him to the rank of colonel. Dhyhan turned him down.'

'I got arrested by the Germans because I went outside the Olympic village gates. They took me into an office and Dhyhan and the manager had to come and confirm who I was before they let me go because they didn't believe I was in the team. I was very frightened because there had been stories of people being shot.'

'Germany scored a goal in that final, the only goal we conceded in those games which we eventually won 8-1 and it was left to Goering to award us the gold medals. It was a very enjoyable match. Because I played left half where I pushed the short corners to the

players that scored the goals, I didn't score much but I did get one in an earlier game.'

'I met Jessie Owen, the legendary black athlete, the day before he won his gold medal and wished him luck.'

As well as being a star hockey player, Joe was persuaded by his train driver father to work on the railways. He first cleaned the engines of steam locomotives, before he was promoted to apprentice boilermaker.

In 1945 Joe's family moved to Britain. He had earlier married Merlyn in Calcutta in 1943, and he and his father continued to work for the railways in the East End of London at Stratford where Joe eventually became a boilermaker supervisor.

Joe and Merlyn settled into life in Britain and had seven children – four boys and three girls – but eventually steam engines disappeared and Joe left to become a postman with the GPO, where he worked until he retired.

Today, Joe is the only surviving member of the 1936 Olympic hockey gold medal winners and, although Joe's wife passed away several years ago, some of his children still live in the East End near him. One looks after the hockey stick he used in those games and a son, who now lives in Australia, cherishes Joe's gold medal. He has many grandchildren and six great grandchildren.

Joe concluded the interview by saying 'I am looking forward to the 2012 Olympic Games in East London and hope to get tickets to see the Indian hockey team.'

○ FACT: From 1928 to 1956 the Indian hockey team remained unbeaten in the Olympic Games, winning six gold medals in a row. In total the Indian hockey team has won eight Olympic golds, the highest among all national teams.

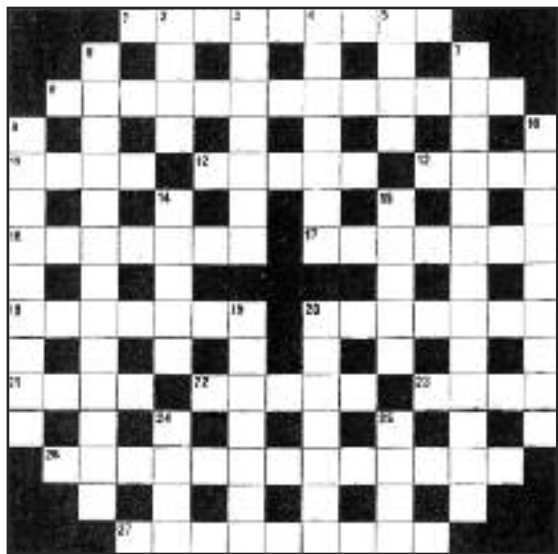


Joe, sixth from left, with his teammates at the 1936 Olympic Games



Dhyhan Chand, the Indian team captain scoring against Germany in the final

Prize Crossword No. 57 set by TLC



CLUES ACROSS

- 1 Weather condition causes serious disruption (3,6)
 8 Improvised platform for Hyde Park speaker (7,6)
 11 Dry conditions (4)
 12 Sticky material exuded from some trees (5)
 13 Skin irritation (4)
 16 Legendary female warriors (7)
 17 Drip dry shirt (3-4)
 18 Colourful flower of the buttercup family (7)
 20 Gather together (7)
 21 Curved structure (4)
 22 Go away at once! (5)

- 23 Cooking chamber (4)
 26 London station (7,6)
 27 Playwright (9)

CLUES DOWN

- 2 Little devils! (4)
 3 Gift to cheer her up (7)
 4 Excited mental state (7)
 5 Enthusiasm (4)
 6 Travel courier (7,6)
 7 Assistance with the luggage on the station (6,7)
 9 Type of ship with twin hulls (9)
 10 Expert problem solvers as a group (5,4)
 14 Type of engine possibly

- powered by electricity (5)
 15 Point of view (5)
 19 Express surprise (7)
 20 A place where charcoal is made (4-3)
 24 Russian ruler (4)
 25 Something added on (4)



MARKS & SPENCER

The winner of this month's crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25

Solution to Crossword No 56 which appeared in the December edition of the ASLEF Journal.

Congratulations to **Mike Harding** from **Dagenham**

ACROSS 1 Footplate 8 Christmas card 11 Iron 12 Snail 13 Barn 16 Aseptic 17 Gesture 18 Council 20 Overeat 21 East 22 Aches 23 Cher 26 Back in Harness 27 Answering
DOWN 2 Omit 3 Titanic 4 Leading 5 Tack 6 Shrove Tuesday 7 Treasure Chest 9 Financier 10 Ancestors 14 Stick 15 Asher 19 Lucknow 20 Open air 24 Skin 25 Anon

Name.....
 Address.....

Postcode.....

Thanks for all your responses to the 56th ASLEF crossword in the December edition. If you complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB by the 14th of the issue month.

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